

# Relaxation Skills for Anxiety

When we feel anxious, panicked, scared, or overwhelmed, our brain and nervous system is in survival mode. Our brain starts to feel overwhelmed. Our body can start to become really fidgety, tight, with our heart beat becoming fast or slower. Relaxation skills can help relax our body and nervous system, so that our brain can work its way out of survival mode when stressed. A relaxed body feels calmer and safer and can lower anxiety.

## 4 Ways you Can Practice Relaxation Skills

### Walking

Ever gone for a short walk when you're upset and noticed your mood improve as you walk? Walking can help your brain and body get out of survival mode. Even a brief 5-10 minute steady walk while taking deep breaths can help relax stressful feelings.

### Ear, Neck, Shoulder Massage

Take your fingers and slide them around each of your ears in a gentle up and down motion. You can also gently slide your fingers up and down your neck and over your shoulders to relieve tension. Repeat until your body starts to feel more relaxed.

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tense the following pairs of muscles for 5 seconds and then release. You can skip or repeat parts and change the order.

- |            |                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Feet    | 5. Arms and fists                    |
| 2. Legs    | 6. Shoulders up to neck              |
| 3. Stomach | 7. Scrunch up your nose and forehead |
| 4. Chest   |                                      |

### Deep Breathing

Deep Breathing tells our brain and body that things are safe. when stressed. 2 options to practice.

1. Pretend you are smelling something good and then blowing on it because it is hot, like pizza.
2. Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, breathe out for 8 seconds. Repeat 4-6 times.

## Tips for Practicing

- Sometimes people find it easier to practice relaxation skills in a quiet space for a few minutes or to pair skills with calming music
- Practice walking outside when you are able to do so. Sunshine is mood booster!
- If you can't breathe out of your nose, pretend you are breathing in and out through a straw with your mouth.
- If something hurts in your body when practicing certain skills, stop the skill.